

EXOMOLOGETARION

A MANUAL OF CONFESSION





The Works of Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite

Volume 1: Exomologetarion – A Manual of Confession

Volume 2: Concerning Frequent Communion

ΒΙΒΛΙΟΝ ΨΥΧΩΦΕΛΕΣΤΑΤΟΝ
ΔΙΗΡΗΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΡΙΑ ΜΕΡΗ.

Ω Ν

ΤΟ ΜΕΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΠΕΡΙΕΧΕΙ
ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑΝ ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΗΝ
ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΝ, ΠΩΣ ΝΑ
ΕΞΟΜΟΛΟΓΗ ΜΕ ΚΑΡΠΟΝ.

ΤΟ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝ.

ΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΝΟΝΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ
ΤΟΥ ΝΗΣΙΤΟΥ ΑΚΡΙΒΩΣ ΕΞΗΓΗΜΕΝΟΥΣ,
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ΤΟ ΔΕ ΤΡΙΤΟΝ.

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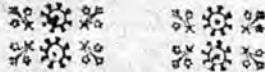
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ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΤΥΠΟΙΣ ΕΚΔΟΘΕΝ, ΕΙΣ ΚΟΙΝΗΝ
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Παρι Νικολάω Γλυκεϊ πρ' εβ' Γραμμάτων.
Con Licenza de' Superiori.

EXOMOLOGETARION

A MANUAL OF CONFESSION

by our Righteous God-bearing Father
Nikodemos the Hagiorite

A BOOK MOST PROFITABLE TO THE SOUL

CONTAINING

Concise instruction to the Spiritual Father on how to conduct a fruitful confession, the Canons of St. John the Faster meticulously interpreted, pleasing counsel for the penitent on how to confess as one should, and a homily on repentance profitable to the soul.

Gathered from various teachers and put into good order.

Translated by Fr. George Dokos



Uncut Mountain Press

EXOMOLOGETARION A MANUAL OF CONFESSION

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Front Cover Photograph: Portable icon from the Holy Monastery of the Annunciation, Ormylia, Greece.

Back Cover Photograph: Portable icon from the Holy Monastery of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, Goumenissa, Greece.

Scriptural quotations are primarily taken from the King James Version. The translator to better reflect the original Greek text has emended some quotations. All citations of the Psalms are taken from *The Psalter According to the Seventy*, translated from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA.

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*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and
just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse
us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9

*Πνευματικοῖς Πατράσι μου εὐχαριστῶ,
Πρεσβεύσατε πρὸς Κύριον ἵνα σωθῶ,
Ὁ πρεσβύτερός Του ὁ ἀχρεῖος ἐγώ,
Ὡ Ἄγιορεῖτα καὶ σέ παρακαλῶ.*



Apolytikion

Tone 3. Awed by the beauty.

Adorned were you O Father by the grace of wisdom*
inspired you appeared as* a trumpet of the Spirit*
and as a teacher of virtues* Nikodemos who speaks of God*
for to all have you offered* teachings of salvation*
and of purity of life* pouring forth enlightenment*
by the richness of your virtuous writings*
through which as light you have illumined the world.*



THE SYNODICAL ACT OF THE ECUMENICAL
PATRIARCHATE CONCERNING THE REGISTERING IN THE
COMPANY OF THE SAINTS OF THE RIGHTEOUS MONK
NIKODEMOS THE HAGIORITE

Protocol Number 1717/31/5/55

† ATHENAGORAS by the mercy of God Archbishop
of Constantinople
New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

It is right and most profitable for the whole body of the Church that they who excelled in virtuous deeds while in the body, and are now departed this life, be venerated and honored and glorified and celebrated yearly, in that the praise given to them that lived virtuously is directed to God Himself, from Whom is every virtue that comes to man, as Gregory the Theologian declaringly theologizes, and also because the praise of good deeds admonishes and stirs those who are slothful and idle to acquire virtue.

In so much therefore as Nikodemos the Hagiorite, in the beginning at the Sacred Royal Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Dionysiou, in which monastery he received

the sacred monastic schema, then in the Sacred Royal Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Great Lavra and in other places, did excel in such eminent feats of virtue on the Holy Mountain, and by sanctity and holiness of life did make himself to be a pattern of the life in Christ, and a living icon of virtue, showing and poising himself to be a teacher of the Church and of the whole Christian body through his various Orthodox and edifying works, our Modesty together with the most sacred and most honorable Metropolitans with us, our beloved brethren and concelebrants in the Holy Spirit, recognizing his God-pleasing life and his works and achievements, and foreseeing the common benefit of the faithful, also taking into account all of his contributions to the Church, as Elder Ananias of the Cell of Lavriotes in Karyes personally submitted, along with all of the holy monks living in asceticism on the Holy Mountain, requesting that the anniversary of his death be established in honor of a Saint, we decree, in accord with the customary practice of the Church and our divine Fathers before us, to bestow upon him the honor due to holy men.

Wherefore we decree synodically, and do ordain, and in the Holy Spirit direct that from this day forth and unto all ages Nikodemos the Hagiorite be numbered among the holy men and Saints of the Church and that he be honored with annual sacred and holy rites and venerated with hymns of praise on the fourteenth day of July, on which day he blessedly departed to the Lord.

In witness thereto, and confirmation, this our present Patriarchal and Synodical Act is made, drawn up, and signed in the Sacred Codex of our Holy and Great Church of Christ, and transmitted without change or alteration to the

Sacred Community of the Holy Mountain that it be placed in their archives.

In the year of salvation 1955, on the 31st day
of the month of May, Eighth Indiction.
Patriarch ATHENAGORAS of Constantinople pronounces

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| † Thomas of Chalcedon | † Iakovos of Derkoi |
| † Dorotheos of the Prince's Islands | † Leontios of Theodoroupolis |
| † Constantine of Eirenoupolis | † Maximos of Sardis |
| † Iakovos of Iconium | † Meliton of Imbros and Tenedos |
| † Jerome of Rhodopolis | † Iakovos of Philadelphia |



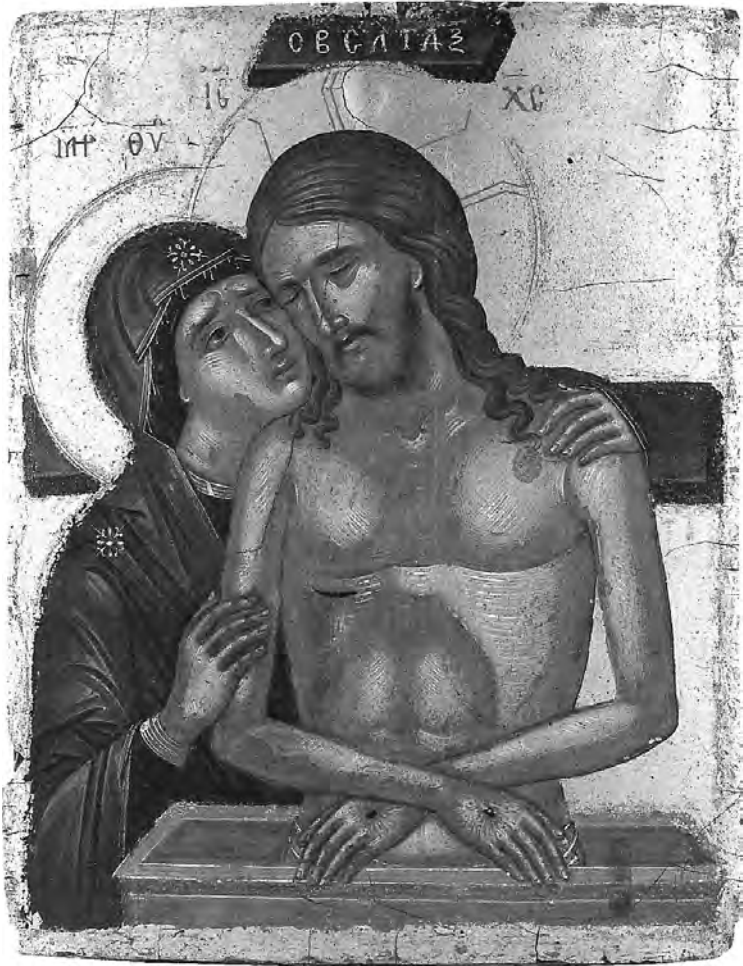


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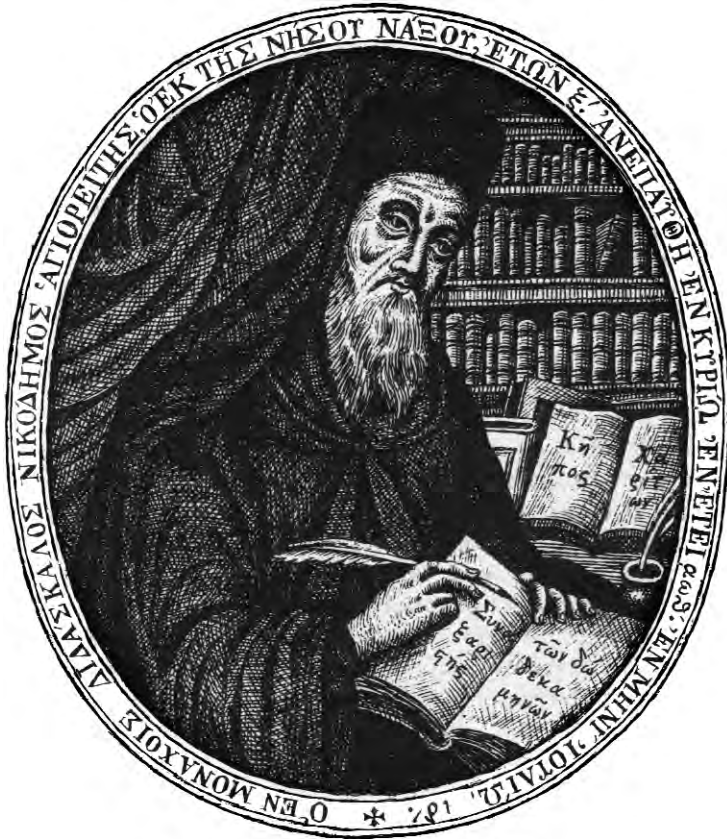
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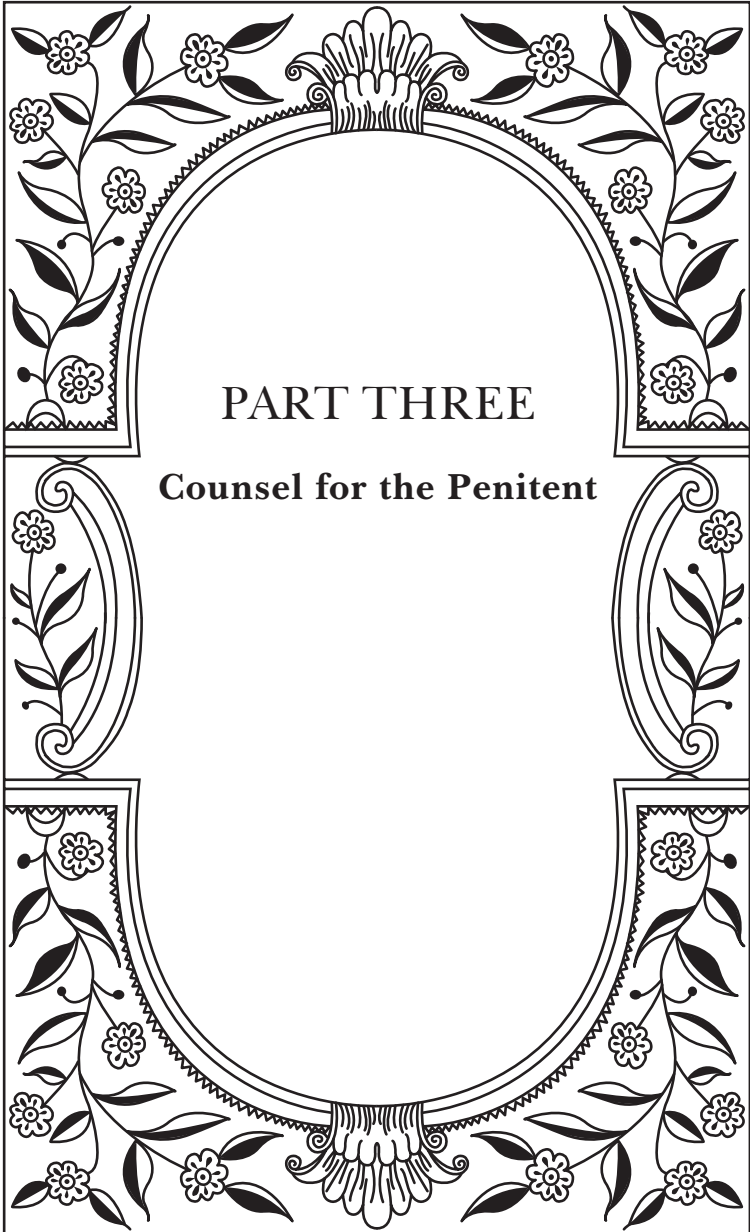
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„Τίς Νικόδημος ὄτος ὃ κλέος μέγα;
„Ἐν ὀρθοδόξοις κὶ σοφοῖς ὄρες Ἄδω;
„Ὅς τὴν δε βίβλον εὐφυνῶς τάξεν φίλε;
„Νάξιος ἀνὴρ. εὐγε τῆς εὐφυνίας!

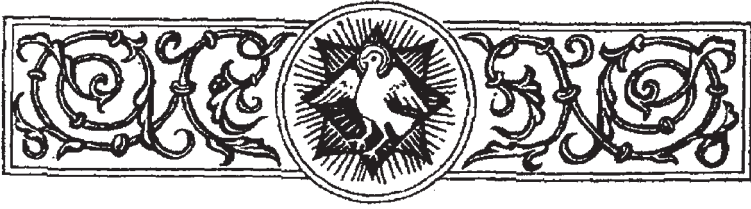
Ἀντεγράφη διὰ χειρὸς Φωτίου Κόντογλα Κυδωνιέως.

αθμγ'





Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand
Matthew 3:2



TO THE BRETHERN IN CHRIST: GREETING

Just as God, on the level of nature, not only provided that we be born into life healthy, but also further provided that we receive again our health when we become physically ill through baths and various treatments, so likewise on the level of grace, God not only provided that we be spiritually reborn healthy through Holy Baptism, but also provided that we reclaim again our spiritual health when we become spiritually ill with a cathartic bath and a wondrous treatment, and this is nothing other than the Mystery of Sacred Confession.

For on the one hand, confession is truly a bath through which, as many souls as are washed, immediately come out relieved from the weight of sin which they bear, which souls Solomon mystically alludes to in the Song of Songs: "As flocks of shorn sheep, that have gone up from the washing" (S. of S. 4:2). Therefore, in explaining this passage, Theodoret says: "One must see in the flock of sheep those who approach repentance from sin;"³²⁷ and Michael Psellos says: "They are those whose conscience has been cleansed by washing."³²⁸ It is a bath in which all the stains of our trespasses are washed

³²⁷ *In Canticum Canticorum* 2, 4, PG 81, 129A.

³²⁸ *In Canticum Canticorum*, PG 122, 609D.

away and disappear, according to the divine Chrysostom: "The confession of those who have sinned brings about the disappearance of their trespasses."³²⁹ And it is a bath which is a second baptism for penitents, more laborious than the first baptism, and just as necessary for salvation as the first baptism, according to Gregory the Theologian: "Yes, and I know of a fifth (baptism) also, which is that of tears, and is much more laborious."³³⁰

But on the other hand, confession is such a potent treatment that it immediately neutralizes every poison of pardonable and mortal sin, which is an infinite evil, and causes every invisible illness to disappear, restoring to the soul its initial health and grace. It is such a wondrous treatment that it instantly changes the sinner into a beautiful angel from that which it was before, having been transformed through sin into an ox, like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:33), or into a pig, like Tiridates,³³¹ or into a devil, like Judas: "And one of you is a devil" (Jn. 6:70). In brief, it is a treatment which changes the sinner from convicted to free, from carnal

³²⁹ *On Genesis*, Homily 20, 2, PG 53, 170.

³³⁰ *Oratio* 39, 17, PG 36, 356A; tr. NPNF (V2-07), p. 358.

Translator's note: St. John of the Ladder says: "Repentance is the renewal of baptism" (Step 5, PG 88, 764B; tr. *The Ladder*, p. 54). And elsewhere he says: "Greater than baptism itself is the fountain of tears after baptism, even though it is somewhat audacious to say so. For baptism is the washing away of evils that were in us before, but sins committed after baptism are washed away by tears. As baptism is received in infancy, we have all defiled it, but we cleanse it anew with tears. And if God in His love for mankind had not given us tears, those being saved would be few indeed and hard to find" (Step 7, PG 88, 804A-804B; tr. *The Ladder*, p. 71).

³³¹ Translator's note: Tiridates III, King of Armenia (286-344 A.D.). See the *Life* of St. Gregory the Wonderworker, November 17.

to spiritual, from a slave of the devil to a son of God, and from liable to eternal hell to an inheritor of the heavenly kingdom. And it is a treatment which, on account of the supranatural results that it brings about, surpasses all of the works of nature, because the justification which it grants to the soul of the sinner so many times over is incomparably greater than if God wanted to create another new universe. For Sirach also hinted at this saying: "No balance can weigh the value of a chaste soul" (Sir. 26:15).

But, O what grief! This cathartic bath and this wondrous treatment, I mean, confession which is most profitable to the soul, has become today to Christians most unprofitable, thinking that they are cleansed in this bath, even if they have not bathed, according to Solomon: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Pr. 30:12).

For some of them either do not confess at all, or confess very rarely, those wretched ones preferring rather to roll around in the muck of their sin like the animals, than to run to the bath of confession and be cleansed. And still others do not confess as they should, neither performing the necessary examination of their conscience and of their sins, nor confessing with the necessary contrition and compunction, nor with the resolve not to sin again, nor having fulfilled their rule, all of which are elements of a confession pleasing to God. Rather, they confess unexamined and unprepared, with no compunction, with no resolve, not having fulfilled their rule, and simply, they confess out of routine only, when it happens that Pasha, or Christmas, or Theophany is approaching. Therefore, in this fashion those unfortunate Christians confess wrongly and they think

that they have confessed well, mocking the truth and being greatly harmed.

We then, being greatly saddened on account of the great harm and delusion of our brother Christians, took great pains to gather together from various teachers the present concise counsel for the penitent, and with it to motivate unconfessed sinners to confess frequently; to explain to those who confess wrongly how they should confess, so that their confession may be God-pleasing and beneficial, and in turn, that the forgiveness of their sins from God through the Spiritual Father may be certain and without question.

So then, my fellow sinners, I ask that you receive this counsel with joy, and as many of you as have stained your souls like I have through the various pollutions of sin, run to the cathartic bath of Sacred Confession in order to be cleansed: "Wash you, make you clean," God commands you through the Prophet Isaiah, "put away the evil of your doings from your souls" (Is. 1:16). As many of you who have spiritual wounds in your soul and "your wounds stink and are corrupt because of your foolishness" (cf. Ps. 37:6) according to David, run to that wondrous treatment in order to be healed. And as many of you who have confessed wrongly up until now, attend to your soul for the love of God, and confess from now on and forevermore correctly and properly.

Receiving this beneficial counsel, I fervently ask you to make a small supplication to God for those souls which labored and worked together for this, and also for that soul which published and printed this counsel, unto your common benefit.

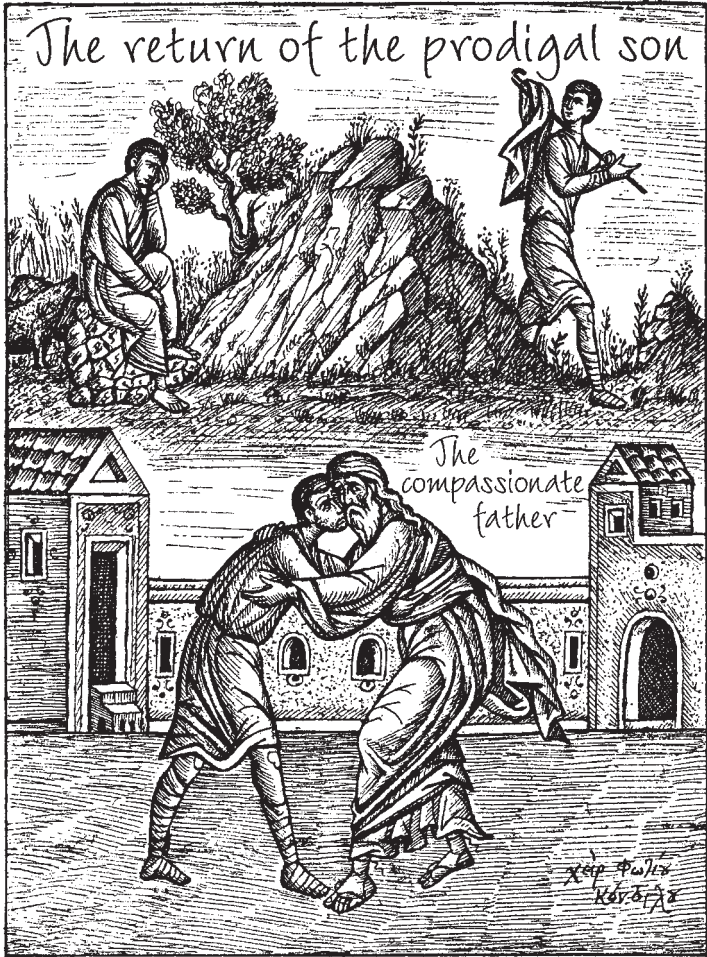
Farewell!

EPIGRAM
FOR THE
PRESENT COUNSEL

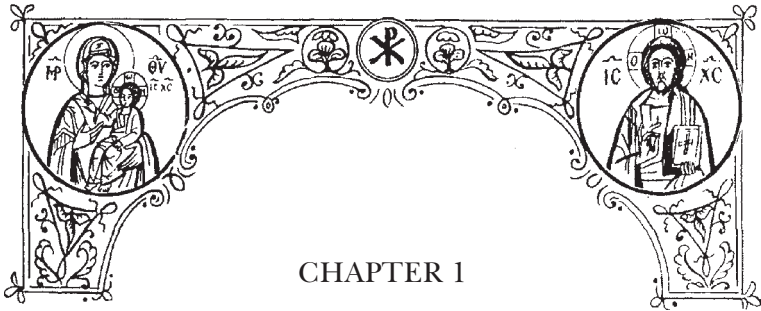
*Naaman having washed seven times in the streams of Jordan,
Was cleansed of his grievous leprosy.*

*One is washed anew of every evil in the depth of repentance,
And thus is cleansed from the defilements of diabolic assaults.*

*Therefore the purpose of the Jordan was repentance,
In which John washed the offenses of the crowds.*



Confess your faults to one another (Jas. 5:16)



CHAPTER 1

How Everyone Should Prepare Before Confession

1. What is repentance?

My brother sinner, this is the preparation you must undergo before you repent and go to confession. Know firstly that repentance, according to St. John of Damaskos, is a returning from the devil to God, which comes about through pain and asceticism.³³² So you also, my beloved, if you wish to repent properly, must depart from the devil and from diabolical works and return to God and to the life proper to God. You must forsake sin, which is against nature, and return to virtue, which is according to nature. You must hate wickedness so much, that you say along with David: "Unrighteousness have I hated and abhorred" (Ps. 118:163), and instead, you must love the good and the commandments of the Lord so much, that you also say along with David: "But Thy law have I loved" (ibid.), and again: "Therefore have I loved Thy commandments more than gold and topaz" (Ps. 118:127). In brief, the Holy Spirit

³³² "Repentance is the returning from that which is against nature to that which is according to nature, from the devil to God, through asceticism and agony" (*De Fide Orthodoxa* 2, 30, PG 94, 976A).

informs you through the wise Sirach what in fact true repentance is, saying: "Turn to the Lord and forsake your sins... Return to the Most High, and turn away from iniquity, and hate abominations intensely" (Sir. 17:25-26).³³³

2. The aspects of repentance

Know secondly that the aspects of repentance are three: contrition, confession, and satisfaction.³³⁴

3. Contrition

Contrition is sorrow and perfect pain of heart,³³⁵ which comes about in a person who, on account of the sins committed, disappointed God and transgressed His divine Law. This contrition comes only to the perfect and those who are sons of God, because it only proceeds from the love for God, just

³³³ Concerning true repentance, see the *Homily on Repentance* at the end of this book.

³³⁴ George Koressios, writing about the Mysteries, adds a fourth aspect of repentance, the loosing of sin (also called "keys"), which happens by the grace of the Holy Spirit through the mediation of the Spiritual Father, and which, he says, especially defines the Mystery of Repentance (from his *Theology*).

³³⁵ This grief does not only consist of its sensible manifestations, like groans and tears, but it mainly consists of the interior will of man hating sin and in wishing that sin never occurred, and the resolve to never commit sin again. And note this also, that this grief and contrition of the heart, according to Koressios, is an element of repentance and, as long as it is found in the heart, a person is in the state of repentance. But as soon as grief leaves the heart, so also does a person leave from the state of repentance, which means that grief and contrition must be present in the heart of the penitent perpetually, for in this way is his repentance true. Concerning this grief, see more on it in the *Homily on Repentance* at the end of this book.

as a son repents simply because he disappointed his father, and not because he was deprived of his inheritance or because he will be ousted from his father's house. Concerning this the divine Chrysostom says: "Groan after you have sinned, not because you are to be punished (for this is nothing), but because you have offended your Master, one so gentle, one so kind, one Who loves you so much and longs for your salvation as to have given even His Son for you. On account of this, groan."³³⁶

4. Affliction

Related to contrition is affliction, which is also a sorrow and imperfect pain of heart, which comes about, not because a person disappointed God by his sins, but because that person was deprived of divine grace, lost Paradise, and gained hell. This affliction belongs to the imperfect, that is, to the hired hands and slaves, because it proceeds not out of love for God, but out of fear and out of love for themselves, just as a hired hand repents on account of losing his wage and a slave repents because he fears the disciplines of his master.³³⁷

So you also, my brother sinner, if you wish to acquire this contrition and affliction in your heart, and through these for your repentance to be pleasing to God, you must

³³⁶ *On II Corinthians*, Homily 4, 6, PG 61, 426.

³³⁷ Some teachers divide the sorrow and the grief which a sinner has on account of his sins into three parts: the grief he has before confession, which they call infliction, or reproach (προσ-τριβή); the grief he has during confession, which they call contrition (συν-τριβή); and the grief which he has after confession, which they call affliction (ἐπι-τριβή).

do the following.

5. Confess to an experienced Spiritual Father

First, search around and learn who is the most experienced Spiritual Father, because Basil the Great says, just as people do not show their maladies and bodily wounds to just any physician, but to experienced physicians who know how to treat them, so also sins must be revealed, not to just anyone, but to those who are able to heal them: "The same fashion should be observed in the confession of sins as in the showing of bodily diseases. As then men reveal the diseases of the body not to all or to chance comers but to those who are experienced in their treatment; so also the confession of sins ought to take place in the presence of those who are able to treat them, as it is written: 'Ye that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak' (Rom. 15:1) - that is, take them away by your care."³³⁸

6. How one is to examine his conscience

Second, just as you would sit down and count your money after a certain business transaction, in like manner go to a particular place, my brother, and two or three weeks before going to the Spiritual Father you found, especially at the beginning of the four fast periods of the year,³³⁹ sit down in that place of quietude, and bowing your head, examine your conscience, which Philo the Jew calls: "The testing of

³³⁸ *Regulae Brevius* 229, PG 31, 1236A; tr. *Ascetic Works of Saint Basil*, pp. 313-314.

³³⁹ My Christian brethren, do not wait until the last moment to confess and go to your Spiritual Father when the days you wish to commune are very near, but

the conscience," and become: "Not a defender, but a judge of your sins," according to the divine Augustine. Consider, like Hezekiah, the whole span of your life in sorrow and bitterness of soul: "I will ponder all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Is. 38:15). Consider also how many sins you committed in deed, word, and by coupling with thoughts,³⁴⁰ after you last confessed, counting the months, weeks, and days. Remember the people with whom you sinned and the places where you sinned, and diligently reflect upon

go many days in advance. And certainly during the four fast periods of the year, as soon as they begin, go to confession with leisure and when you have time, so you may be properly corrected. One or two days before you are to commune, go to your Spiritual Father so that he may read a prayer of forgiveness over you on account of the pardonable sins which you committed between the time of your confession and your reception of Communion, and so receive in this manner, according to this good custom which is followed by the monks of the Holy Mountain.

³⁴⁰ Because the people of today either find it burdensome to carry out this light examination of their conscience, or on account of forgetfulness they are unable to remember their sins, see the pertinent areas of Part 1 of this book, *Instruction to the Spiritual Father*, which we have prepared for you, brother, in particular, Chapter 3, *Concerning Mortal Sins, Pardonable Sins, and Sins of Omission*, and Chapter 4, *Concerning the Ten Commandments*, where we explain who errs in these commandments, in order to lighten your conscience by helping you easily remember your sins. So, look there and examine your conscience and bring to mind the sins you have committed according to what is said there in order to confess them. Read also Chapter 6, *Concerning Thoughts*, in order to learn from there that you must also confess your bad thoughts, if not all of your thoughts, and certainly those thoughts which disturb you and assault you the most, because just as the eggs of birds, when they are hidden in dung, are enlivened and hatch chicks, so also bad thoughts, when they are not revealed to a Spiritual Father, are vivified and become deeds, according to John of the Ladder: "As hens' eggs that are warmed in dung hatch out, so thoughts that are not confessed hatch out and proceed to action" (Step 26, PG 88, 1085C; tr. *The Ladder*, p. 193).

these things in order to find every one of your sins. This is how the wise Sirach counsels you from one side saying: "Before judgment, examine yourself" (Sir. 18:20), and from the other, Gregory the Theologian says: "Examine yourself more than your neighbor. Account of actions is superior to an account of money. For money is subject to corruption, but actions remain."³⁴¹

And just as hunters are not satisfied with merely finding a beast in the forest, but attempt through every means to also kill it, likewise, my brother sinner, you should also not be satisfied with merely examining your conscience and with finding your sins, for this profits you little, but struggle by every means to kill your sins through the grief in your heart, namely, through contrition and affliction. And in order to acquire contrition, consider how much you have wronged God through your sins. In order to also acquire affliction, consider how much you have wronged yourself through your sins.

7. Sin wrongs God in three ways

Consider first how your sins have wronged God. 1) By your sins you offended and dishonored the Most High and Great God – you who are but a worm have offended and dishonored the Almighty One, you who are but clay have offended and dishonored the Maker of all, you who are nothing have offended and dishonored the Infinite Being – because you transgressed His law: "Through breaking the law thou dishonourest God" (Rom. 2:23).

³⁴¹ *Carmina Moralia* 33, PG 37, 932A.

2) By your sins you have shown yourself to be a thankless slave and son to such an all-good Master and to your most-affectionate Father, Who loved you before the ages, not on account of some worthiness of your own, but only on account of His goodness did He decide in His divine mind to create you, when He could have created others instead of you. You have wronged Him because you have shown yourself to be thankless to the God Who granted you being, Who formed you in His image and likeness, Who gave you a body containing all of the senses and a soul with all of the faculties, Who made you king of all earthly creatures, Who has provided you with sustenance, clothing, and shelter, Who commanded all of His sensible creatures to serve you, Who has saved you from so many dangers, illnesses, and poverty that so many others suffer from, Who gave you an angel to stand by you always and protect you.

You wrong God because you have shown yourself to be thankless to your great Benefactor, Who ordained it that you be born from Christian parents, Who received you so many times at His Mysteries, Who made you His son through Holy Baptism, Who redeemed you from the hands of demons, Who became a man for your sake, Who shed His blood to the last drop in order to make you an heir of His kingdom, Who so many times waited for you to repent after you sinned, while condemning many others who had committed lesser sins than your own, Who followed you when you fled from Him, Who knocked on your heart when you did not want Him, Who spoke to you, loved you, pleaded with you, desiring your salvation.

In brief, you wrong God because you have shown yourself to be thankless to such a Master, Who bestowed upon you

so many blessings of nature and of grace, in part and in whole, hidden and manifest, and the worst thing of all is that, at the same time that you received all of these graces before your eyes, you, the ungrateful creature, dared to repay Him with your wicked acts.

O my sinful brother! If someone were to give you only a single one of all these blessings, you would not know how to thank him. But, when not a man, but the Most High God, the Creator of all the angels, has bestowed so many graces upon you, how is it that you, on the contrary, show yourself to be so thankless toward Him? Wonder, my brother, wonder at how the earth has carried you and has not yet split asunder to swallow you alive. Wonder at how the sky has not yet hurled lighting bolts in order to scorch you; how the air, which you have polluted by your sins, has not yet blown noxious winds in order to poison you, and how all of the elements have not yet risen against you like beasts in order to swallow you alive, unable to endure seeing you, the apostate and insidious one, to display such thanklessness by your sins toward their Creator and your utmost Benefactor: "Perverse and crooked generation, do ye thus requite the Lord?" (Dt. 32:5).

3) You wronged God, because by your sins you committed an unheard of injustice and mockery against the redemption which the Son of God accomplished for you, for you placed Him on the Cross a second time, you stomped on His love, you profaned His All-holy Blood, you insulted the grace of His Spirit, you opened His wounds, you renewed the spittings, the slappings, the crown of thorns, the scourgings, the nails, the spear, and all of the sufferings and humiliations, because you committed sin, which was the cause of His Crucifixion:

"They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6), says the divine Paul.³⁴²

O my brother, if you carefully consider these three spears by which you wounded God through sinning, I am certain you will roar and growl like a lion on account of your sighs: "I have roared from the groaning of my heart" (Ps. 37:8), and you will hate and be disgusted with sin, and your heart will be broken into a thousand pieces, even if it was calloused and hard as a rock, and you will cause it to shed tears of blood. Therefore, as much as possible, concentrate and meditate upon these three points in order to acquire holy contrition, which is the noblest and most precious part of repentance, being sad for no other reason than because you sinned against God and grieved the Holy Spirit, according to the Apostle: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30).

This is why David was not grieved on account of the other injuries which sin brought upon him, but only grieved because sin caused him to wrong God, even considering all of the harm he brought to himself and to others, wherefore he said: "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee" (Ps. 50:4). Likewise, Manasseh was grieved only because he wronged God, and his heart never found rest, wherefore he said: "I have no relief, for I have provoked Thy wrath and have done what is evil in Thy sight, not doing Thy will, and not keeping Thy commands" (Mt. 1:10).³⁴³

³⁴² For a fuller explanation of these three points, look ahead to Precaution 5.

³⁴³ The Prayer of Manasseh is confirmed as genuine by St. Ephraim, who brings forth evidence from the prayer. You also, brother, should read it, especially when preparing for Confession, for it brings much compunction. The divine

8. Sin wrongs the sinner in three ways

Then, in order for you to also acquire affliction brother, consider also how many bad things sins have brought upon you.

1) Consider how they have caused you to lose the supranatural graces which God granted to you in this life: the grace of justification, the grace of sonship, of being His dwelling place, and all the rest, any one of which is more precious than all the nobilities, than all the wisdoms, than all the beauties, and than all the powers. In brief, even one degree of any of these graces is more precious than all of the endowments of nature and of all the most valuable goods in the world, as Solomon says: "All gold is but a little sand in her sight" (Wis. 7:9).

2) Consider how sins have caused you to lose the eternal blessedness of Paradise, the delight and vision of God, the vision of the most-sweet Theotokos, the Mother of God and Mother of all Christians, the fellowship with the angels, the company of the Saints, inexpressible joy, the heavenly kingdom, everlasting rest, eternal light, and simply, all of the good things which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor can the mind of man comprehend (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9). Sins caused you to trade all of these good things for a small, bitter, and confounded pleasure. Sins caused you to disregard all of these good things as nothing, just as those Jews disregarded Jerusalem, the antitype of Paradise: "And they set at nought the desirable land" (Ps. 105:24).

Scripture also refers to this prayer, saying: "Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God" (2 Chr. 33:18).

3) Consider how sins have brought you eternal hell, the unquenchable fire, the gnashing of teeth, the sleepless worm, the tormenting of all the members of your body and all the powers of your soul, and where there are always those things which are abhorred and not things desirable. There you will never enjoy a single pleasure, you will never see a friend, you will never converse with a relative, you will never sleep, and you will never find rest, even for a single moment, from those torturous demons that will torment you. Simply speaking, consider how sins caused you to gain an eternity of the infinite torments of hell, in which one single moment is, even after thousands of years, like the sand of the sea, or like the stars of heaven, or like the drops of rain, or like the leaves of the trees, or like the atoms in the air, and that moment will never, ever pass: "And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone... And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:10-11).

Considering these things for a second reason, beloved, your heart will certainly be pricked with compunction and you will acquire the aforementioned affliction, being grieved for no other reason than that, because of your sins, you suffered an infinite loss, an injury which not even all the kingdoms of the world are worthy of recompensing in the slightest measure.

Alas! Is it but a small loss and slight grief for you to lose God, you poor sinner, Who is complete delight, complete joy, complete desire, and complete insatiable satiety? Who is complete light and the origin of light, complete life and the origin of life, complete wisdom and the origin of wisdom? Is it but slight grief to lose God, Whose beauty surpasses every beauty, Whose wisdom surpasses every wisdom, Whose

sweetness surpasses every sweetness, a single ray of Whose glory, if it shone in Hades, would immediately change Hades into Paradise?

Is it but slight grief to lose the beginningless Father, the co-beginningless Son, and the All-holy Spirit, the One Trihypostatic God, from Whom everything beautiful derives its beauty, from Whom everything bright derives its brightness, from Whom every living thing derives life, from Whom everything rational derives its rationality, and from Whom every being derives its principle of being?

In a single word, is it but slight grief to lose your God, you poor soul, Who is absolute good, Who is your beginning, your middle, and your end? "Know therefore and see (God Himself cries out to you), know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jer. 2:19). For this reason Basil the Great said that even if someone is not punished, even if someone is not tormented, but they are only deprived of God, this is more intolerable than all of the future punishments: "Separation and estrangement from God are more unbearable than the punishment reserved for hell and more oppressive to the sufferer than the being deprived of light is to the eye, even if there be no pain in addition, or than the loss of its life is to an animal."³⁴⁴ And if Esau, on account of losing his birthright and his father's blessing, was so greatly distressed that he bellowed such a bitter and fearful cry: "And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry" (Gen. 27:34), how will you, the thrice-wretched, not cry out to heaven? How will you, the poor soul, not

³⁴⁴ *Regulae Fusius* 2, 2, PG 31, 912B; tr. *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works*, pp. 235-236.

groan from the depths of your heart on account of losing so many supranatural blessings and graces of your heavenly Father? Or because you are deprived of beholding the sweetest face of the Mother of God, the vision of which, after God, is like a second blessedness in Paradise, and because you lost forever the most-compassionate Mother of Christians, in whose Churches you worshipped, and whose icons you venerated, and whose name you called upon in all of your troubles and who immediately heard you? Or because you are deprived of the blissful company of all the angels and the Saints, whose Feasts you celebrated and whose sacred books you listened to and read every day? Or because, on the contrary, instead of all these good things, you inherited unending evils and torments? In brief, how will you not lament, sinner, on account of losing your God, together with Whom you lost everything, everything?

O infinite loss! O immeasurable loss! I am certain, brother, that if you saw but once this great loss which you caused by your sins, you would cry out like that king who said at the time of his death that he had lost everything, for by losing God, he also lost body and soul, earth and heaven, temporal things and eternal things, and indeed, everything: "All is lost! I am deprived of everything!" I am certain that if you saw at once before your eyes all of the things which you lost, you would promise yourself a thousand times over that you would never sin again, and that you would be reformed and live a holy life, just like that young man was reformed who was losing a lot of money playing cards because he did not see the future consequences. For when one day he lost twelve thousand ducats³⁴⁵ and saw all of the money gathered

³⁴⁵ Translator's note: The Venetian golden ducat was coined from the 1200's

before him and then placed into twenty-four sacks by his father, that poor soul became terrified by this great loss and from then on he decided to never play cards again.

9. Sorrow over temporal goods is futile

Know this also, brother, that you should not grieve if, on account of your sins, you lose some natural or temporal good, whether it be your children, or your wife, or even all of the kingdoms of the world, or even your own life, for this sorrow is not considered as repentance, but it is rather vain and futile and unacceptable to God. For Saul also grieved when he heard from Samuel that he would lose his kingdom and his very life, so much that, out of his fear, he fell to the ground: "Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth" (1 Kg. 28:20), but in vain. Antiochus also came to realize the evils he had committed when he saw that he would lose both his kingdom and his life by a painful death, but in vain, as the Scripture says: "Then the abominable fellow made a vow to the Lord" (2 Macc. 9:13). I leave to say that sorrow over worldly and temporal goods is not only futile for the sinner, but also brings him death: "The sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

through the 1700's. One ducat is worth approximately \$53.00 today (twelve thousand ducats = \$636,000).

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